

PRESS RELEASE

For Release: Embargoed until 12:01 a.m. ET November 5, 2015

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Connecticut Gets a “B” on March of Dimes Premature Birth Report Card

Report Card Highlights Racial Disparities and Gaps Among Communities

(Glastonbury, CT)– Connecticut earned a “B” on the 2015 March of Dimes Premature Birth Report Card, which for the first time graded the state’s most populated cities and revealed persistent disparities between communities and among racial and ethnic groups.

According to the National Center for Health Statistics, in 2014 Connecticut’s preterm birth rate was 9.2 percent, and the national preterm birth rate was 9.6 percent, both meeting the March of Dimes 2020 goal of 9.6 percent early. Because of this accomplishment Connecticut recently received both the March of Dimes Franklin Delano Roosevelt Prematurity Campaign Leadership Award and the March of Dimes Virginia Apgar Prematurity Campaign Leadership Award. The awards were presented in recognition of the commitment, leadership and collaboration that results in achieving the March of Dimes 2020 preterm birth rate goal of 9.6 percent. The Virginia Apgar Award is given to recognize states that accepted and met a challenge from the March of Dimes and the Association of State and Territorial Health Officials (ASTHO) to lower their preterm birth rates at least 8 percent between 2009 and 2014.

The organization’s Board of Trustees has set a new and higher preterm birth standard of 8.1 percent by 2020 and 5.5 percent by 2030 for the 2015 Premature Birth Report Card. Reaching the March of Dimes 2020 goal of 8.1 percent will mean that 210,000 fewer babies will be born preterm, and achieving the 2030 goal will mean 1.3 million fewer babies will be born preterm, saving nearly \$70 billion, the March of Dimes estimates.

Of note on the report card are communities within Connecticut that are trailing behind the state’s rate. Bridgeport, Hartford, Stamford and Waterbury all had higher preterm birth rates than the statewide rate. The preterm birth rate in New Haven, by comparison, is encouraging, with a better-than-state rate of 9.1 percent.

Connecticut ranked 11th on the disparity index with a score of 18 to indicate the gaps between racial and ethnic groups in its preterm birth rate.

“Connecticut’s report card reflects the state’s progress in reducing pre-term and low weight births, while highlighting the conspicuous disparities in birth outcomes that exist in our state,” stated DPH Commissioner Dr. Jewel Mullen. “This report underscores the important work that is ongoing in Connecticut to improve the potential for healthy infant and child well-being for all Connecticut residents. We remain committed to continuing this work with the March of Dimes and many other community partners who are dedicated to improving birth outcomes so that all Connecticut children have the best chance for a healthy life.”

“This detailed information will show us where we have the greatest need and allow us to meet the unique needs of each community,” said Christopher Morosky, MD, Assistant Professor, Dept. of Ob-Gyn at UConn Health Center, and co-chair, Program Services Committee for the March of Dimes Connecticut Chapter. “We’re proud that our state does a better than average job of preventing premature births, but despite the progress, premature birth is the number one killer of babies and not all of our families are sharing in our success. There are large gaps in the preterm birth rate between communities in our state, and racial and ethnic disparities persist.”

“We should applaud March of Dimes for their tireless effort as champions for the health and wellbeing of women and babies across our country. Our state chapter, along with their partners, have made strong efforts towards improving Connecticut’s rate of preterm birth and in achieving our state’s grade of B on the National March of Dimes Premature Birth Report Card. While acknowledging our strengths and the progress we as a state have made, we also note that racial disparities in birth outcomes continue to exist in Connecticut. We will continue to focus on improving our state’s overall rating and continue to make a concentrated effort to address the disparities in birth outcomes which exist among our state’s most vulnerable populations and communities,” said Amy Gagliardi, chair of the Women's Health Subcommittee of the Connecticut Medicaid Managed Care Council and chair, Government Affairs Committee for the March of Dimes Connecticut Chapter.

The US earned a “C” on the 2015 Report Card. Idaho, Oregon, Vermont, and Washington earned “As,” 19 states received a “B,” 18 states and the District of Columbia got a “C,” six others a “D,” and Alabama, Louisiana, Mississippi and Puerto Rico received an “F.” The U.S. preterm birth rate ranks among the worst of high-resource countries, the March of Dimes says. Worldwide, 15 million babies are born preterm, and nearly one million die due to an early birth and its complications. Babies who survive an early birth face serious and lifelong health problems, including breathing problems, jaundice, vision loss, cerebral palsy and intellectual delays.

The long term trend of slow, yet sustained success in the fight to give more babies a healthy start in life is encouraging, the March of Dimes says. Thousands of early births were avoided, saving babies’ lives and health as well as millions of dollars in health care costs.

The March of Dimes says the years of improvement in the US preterm birth rate came through bold leadership and the implementation of programs and policies by state and local health departments, hospitals and health care providers. Also a more accurate method of measuring pregnancy length recently was adopted by the National Center for Health Statistics. The new measurement already is used by most other high-resource countries.

The March of Dimes says it recognizes that continued research to identify new medical advances to prevent preterm birth is necessary in order to reach the new goal. The March of

Dimes has invested in a nationwide network of five new prematurity research centers to find the unknown causes of this still too-common problem and potential solutions.

The March of Dimes Prematurity Campaign is guided by a Steering Committee of six leadership organizations. In addition to the March of Dimes, members include: the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP); the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists (ACOG); the Association of Maternal and Child Health Programs (AMCHP); the Association of State and Territorial Health Officials (ASTHO); the Association of Women's Health, Obstetric & Neonatal Nurses (AWHONN); and the National Association of County and City Health Officials (NACCHO).

The March of Dimes works to improve the health of babies by preventing birth defects, premature birth and infant mortality. The March of Dimes is the leading nonprofit organization for pregnancy and baby health. For the latest resources and information, visit marchofdimes.org or nacersano.org. Find us on [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#).

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